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ABSTRACT

The processes of learning about and exploring different vocations should begin in elementary school. Elementary school teachers and administrators planning career education must be careful to develop sequential objectives that are achievable, challenging, and tailored to students' interests. Elementary-level career education may emphasize separate units of study or be integrated into ongoing units of study. Objectives of elementary-level career education can include helping students achieve the following goals: become responsible, caring individuals; develop habits of cleanliness; develop good human relations skills; learn to balance personal and societal needs; and learn to think effectively and make decisions. Because they may well become vital in students' career education, the language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, and music and art must all be integrated with career education. Elementary-age students also need ample opportunities to experience vital careers in separate and/or integrated units of study, including through the following activities: (1) listening to community members discuss their careers; (2) developing scrapbooks illustrating different careers in the societal arena; (3) participating in role-playing activities; (4) developing collages and murals showing salient careers; (5) researching careers of interest at their individual development level; and (6) taking excursions to observe significant careers firsthand. (MN)

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Vocational Education in the Elementary School

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Knowledge about and exploring of different vocations should be a must, starting in the elementary school years. If anything is valuable to learn for students is to become proficient in a career. Each person in society is expected to possess a career ultimately. An adequate income needs to be earned to support the self and family. Since a future vocation is necessary for all, quality decisions must be made beginning early in life. The elementary school years is not too early to begin to achieve a vision of what one desires to do in life in contributing to the world of work. There are many kinds of desirable work to do. Needs of society as well as personal needs must be met in performing at the work place. As time goes on, it can be overwhelming to limit career choices as well as to enter a chosen endeavor. Choosing what one would like to do to accomplish and achieve in the world of work is much better than to drift into a vocation that is un fulfilling. Choices made need to be realistic and yet challenging.

Sequential Objectives in Career Education

Students entering the elementary school years are approximately five years of age on the kindergarten level.. The concept of sequence is vital to consider by teachers and administrators as the learner is promoted through the primary and intermediate grades of schooling. Objectives need to be carefully chosen for ongoing lessons and units of study. The objectives need to be achievable and yet posses challenge to the student. Motivation is necessary for goal attainment. Interest factors of students need to be considered when objectives are selected for learners to achieve. Interest is a powerful ingredient in learning and makes for effort in achievement. Reasons for seeking information and pursuing goal interests provide for purpose in learning. Those individuals who do not possess purpose for the world of work may move haphazardly to and fro in a state of inadequacy and dislike of the involved work endeavor. The goal then is to assist young learners to develop interest in and a desire to contribute to the world of work.

Career education in the elementary school years may stress separate units of study or be integrated in ongoing units of study. Perhaps, both are important ways of organizing career education in the curriculum. Which objectives then are important to stress in the elementary school years? Certainly throughout the different curriculum areas pursued, being responsible is salient. Too frequently, students do not want to assume responsibility for doing and completing assignments and tasks on time in ongoing lessons and units of study. Responsibility should rest upon the student. He/she needs to ask questions if something is not understood in an assignment. Clearly stated answers

must be in the offing from the teacher or another student. Effort needs to be put forth by the learner to become a productive individual.

Second, in addition to becoming a responsible person, students need to be caring individuals. Thus, students need to work cooperatively in order to assist each other as the need indicates to do so. Not caring for each other can make for a hostile learning environment where few feel comfortable. Then too, caring feelings for each other develop a more accepting school climate for achievement. Later on at the work place, an emotional climate of "not being alone in this world" should prevail. To know that others care is indeed a wonderful feeling.

Third, habits of cleanliness must be emphasized. Body odors of different kinds are offensive to others. Dental and physical hygiene not only are beneficial to others but also to the self. Illnesses and diseases are cut down through making a constructive effort to minimize harmful effects to the self as well as to others.

Fourth, good human relations assist in making for better mental health in school and in society. Rude and impolite behavior hinders quality learning and interactions among individuals. Certainly, in school and at the work place, desirable relations among individuals are necessary so that an environment exists whereby a pleasant situations is in evidence to develop, achieve, learn, and grow.

Fifth, becoming the kind of individual desired is an optimal goal. Within an open ended environment, one cannot tell what will happen in the future, but one can plan and work toward desirable goals. These goals are set at a high level, but are achievable with effort. Unrealistic goals need modification through thought and self acceptance.

Sixth, being accepted by others is a vital objective in the school curriculum as well as in life. Within a framework of belonging, the student needs to be creative in problem solving. Life does not emphasize the same answers to problematic situations. In fact, sameness does not work. New, novel solutions are necessary to solve dilemma situations, now and in the future. The world's social environment continually changes, and thus new solutions to perplexities and uncertainties are necessary. The acceptance by others dimension as compared to being creative can cause conflict, but a balance needs to be worked out between the two concepts.

Seventh, individuals have a need for recognition for things well done. Sometimes, the reward is intrinsic in that success at a difficult task provides incentives. At other times, recognition needs are met from others. Students presently need to feel adequately rewarded for what is done well as well as at the future work place. Notification of reward for things well done needs to be present.

Eighth, a balance between the personal and the social needs to be in evidence. The teacher may place students in individual as well in cooperative endeavors in the classroom. Later in life, there are personal

enrichment activities for individuals at home as well as group/collective situations at the work place. This goes along with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1993) of interpersonal (group endeavors) as well as intrapersonal intelligence (individual endeavors) in which individuals may reveal optimal achievement.One may excel in one of these intelligences largely, and individual differences need to be taken into consideration. Some indicate more achievement when working in groups and others when working individually at sequential tasks. Learning styles theory also agrees with the beliefs that some achieve more optimally when working individually as compared to working collectively (Dunn and Dunn, 1979).

Ninth, being able to think effectively is almost the major purpose of education. The Educational Policies Commission (1962) stated that the central purpose of schools is helping students to think well in all facets of life. Thus, to be able to separate facts from opinions, relevant from unimportant information, fantasy from reality, bandwagon approaches, and "everyone buys it," needs to be analyzed and modified so that quality decision making is in evidence.

Tenth, decision making skills are of utmost importance. Continuously, individuals are asked to make choices individually as well as within a group.The decisions may involve ethics, morality, job related items, human relations, and use made of previous knowledge/skills acquired. Perhaps, the individual versus the group in society becomes blurred when decision making is involved in the every day environment. Thus, many reference sources need to be used as data in the making of decisions. Being able to make good choices from the many alternatives requires quality judgment (See Ediger, 1999, 278-278).

Integrating Career Education and General Education

Too frequently, career education and general education is separated and "never the twain shall meet." However, this is not as it should be. Students should be guided to perceive ways of applying what has been learned in general education to that which is beneficial in society. Making use of previous learnings assists students to review, reflect, rehearse, and modify knowledge and skills achieved. The author will now clarify general education/the basics with how these may be used in career education.

The language arts may well become vital in career education. Thus, the following need adequate attention:

1. being able to read content with meaning, in career related work.
2. being able to write for a variety of purposes, such as business/friendly letters, explanations, charts, diagrams, memos, outlines, acknowledgements, as well as creative endeavors in career work.

3. being able to listen carefully to others, such as in receiving directions, instructions, content in discussions, lectures, and ideas presented at meetings, among other purposes.

4. being able to communicate orally in a clear and distinct manner. It is vital to communicate effectively in school and in society (Ediger, 1999, 7-15).

Mathematics might well be incorporated into a quality career education program in the following ways:

1. being precise in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as well as in the use of geometry, algebra, and trigonometry.
2. being actively involved in logical thinking in mathematics as well as in other academic disciplines.
3. being able to analyze, synthesize, and assess mathematics applications to detect errors.
4. being proficient in communicating mathematics content (Ediger, 1998, 26-30).

Social studies and its relationships to career education may be stressed in the following ways:

1. being able to relate careers of other nations/countries in ongoing social studies units (objectives, learning opportunities, and assessment procedures) to the present and future work place in the United States.
2. being able to think critically and in unique ways.
3. being able to use tools effectively of the historian, geographer, political scientist, and the economist.
4. being able to integrate the social sciences with career education (Ediger, 1999, 330-332).

Science units of study correlate well with career education:

1. being able to use the principles and laws of science in school and at the work place.
2. being proficient in using the methods of science in all endeavors, personally and socially, such as problem identification, data gathering, hypothesis development, as well as hypothesis testing and modification.
3. being able to achieve an attitude of wanting objective information.
4. being effective in individual and group work in science units of study when communicating theoretical and practical subject matter (Ediger, 2000, 177-182).

Health units of study are highly salient. What is learned in terms of good principles of health education need to be applied to the learner's

personal life. To do well in school and in society requires proper physical and mental health. "A healthy mind in a healthy body" is a very wise slogan to follow. Self destructive tendencies need to be remedied with and through education as well as making practical application for their elimination. Self destructive practices include use of tobacco products, liquor, drugs, sexual practices which destroy the self, teen age pregnancy, dangerous and daring lack of safety procedures, among others. Quality physical education should be for all and include developing a heath, wholesome body, capable of enduring/achieving important objectives in school as well as later at the work place.

Music and art education needs to assist students to enjoy the fine arts in its diverse manifestations. Definite objectives, learning opportunities to achieve these chosen ends, as well as assessment procedures in the fine arts need to be in the offing. student enrichment in the fine arts should provide for a more enjoyable life as well as in recreational pursuits. Most individuals are consumers of the fine arts. They might enjoy listening to good music and appreciate the work of artists and their paintings/art products. For a few, the fine arts may become a future avocation or even a vocation. A well rounded education needs to the lot of all elementary school pupils as a part of the career education curriculum.

Implementing Quality in Career

Elementary age students need ample opportunities to experience vital careers in separate and/or integrated units of study. In supervising student teachers for thirty years, the writer noticed quality learning opportunities such as the following in stressing careers:

1. having individuals from the community come into the classroom to discuss their individual career to students. Objects relating directly to the career should be shown, such as what a registered nurse (RN) uses in his/her field of specialization.
2. having students develop a scrap book of cut outs showing different careers in the societal arena. Underneath each career illustrated, a description needs to be written.
3. having students role play different careers to indicate understanding and identifying what is left to learn.
4. having students develop dioramas in collaborative endeavors to illustrate careers.
5. having students develop collages and murals showing what are salient careers.
6. having students make a pictured dictionary of and label each career therein.
7. having students do research on their individual development level on a career of personal interest.

8. having students chose a library book to read on careers. The learner may discuss the content read within a peer group or with the teacher or an aide.

9. having students interview a teacher, the principal, or other school worker on what is important in his/her career.

10. having interest centers for students to work at involving the world of work.

11. having students view and discuss current content from video tapes, films, filmstrips, CD ROMs, and other AV media on careers.

12. having students developmentally use the Internet to learn about careers .

13. having students take an excursion to observe first hand significant careers in the community.

14. having students discuss what is important in choosing a career.

15. having students discuss with their parents as to what the later feels is salient in career choices.

Learning opportunities should capture student attention, make provision for individual differences, assist learners to attach meaning to what is being learned, develop reasons for achieving, provide for diverse styles of learning, and integrate multiple intelligences.

Students should begin to develop a vision and goals through analyzing diverse careers. At a young age, these visions/goals are subject to modification and change. Learners should be encouraged to talk to others about careers and bring the obtained ideas to the classroom setting. Each student may develop a portfolio with teacher guidance on careers in the community. He/she should become flexible in thinking about diverse career opportunities. Students need to learn much abut themselves in a positive way. Openness to new ideas and possibilities should be in the offing. Reflecting upon what has been learned is important. Learning to make decisions is an important factor in studying about careers in the community. Personal satisfaction is important when thinking about career choices and leisure time activities..

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